The Witch Hunt Moves South: Jennings Perry Reports from New Orleans

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Eisenhower (Like Bao Dai) Could Use Some Outside Help

The idea that other countries have a right to intervene when internal conditions become a danger to world stability was recently made explicit at Caracas. It is written into the North Atlantic Pact, which brings the alliance into play when the "political independence" of a member State is threatened by "internal aggression." The UN Charter, perhaps because the German experience was fresh in the minds of the framers, gives the Security Council a power to act against any "threat to the peace" broad enough to deal with the rise of some new Hitler. It is a pity there is no world combination of powers strong enough to apply so ready a remedy to Washington. Eisenhower (like Bao Dai) is beginning to need outside help.

This conceit, of course, is not meant to be taken too seriously. Though so much has been done in recent years to cultivate mutual suspicion and distrust in this country, Americans are a long way from taking up arms against each other. The courts still operate. The roads are safe. The police and Army are politically loyal. McCarthy is a long way from being the threat to this Republic that Hitler was to Weimar in 1932, or even in 1928. But a political development which deprives the government of the world's most powerful country of capacity to act efficiently and sensibly is a development which endangers world peace and security.

Life and Death in Flabby Hands

The U. S. is the leader, organizer and paymaster of a huge coalition in a world split in two. It holds in its hands the most terrible instruments of destruction ever developed by the mind of man and it claims the right to use these for "instant retaliation" under certain circumstances, yet those hands show themselves increasingly shaky and incompetent, the will behind them is flabby and at the mercy of emotional tides which make sober reasoning ever more difficult.

A government which insists that in some circumstances it must have the right to unleash hell on earth without consulting its own people or others; the right to judge quickly and perhaps fatally obscure questions of aggression on some distant border; this government cannot pull itself together sufficiently to make one upstart Senator and a brash young lawyer stand aside while it settles a cheap and scandalous little affair in which they have tried to bulldoze the Army.

"Instant" Action—and Nine Retrials

The Secretary of State who announced the "instant retaliation" policy is so poorly equipped to make independent decisions against sinister pressure that after prolonged study he has ordered an accused young diplomat, John P. Davies, to undergo another trial—a *ninth* trial—on "subversive" charges so spurious they would have been thrown out of court in any stable country long ago. The difficulty here is more than moral—a favorite term of the unctuous Secretary's. It is political. Davies was one victim of the secret power Chiang Kai-shek has exerted to drive out of Washington all those who took an astringent view of his regime and a sober attitude toward the great convulsion in the Far East. This was McCarran's victim, and behind McCarran is the China Lobby, and because of its power we move toward Geneva unable to recognize realities in China or Indo-China.

On every hand there is evidence of terror in American life, freezing into fearful inaction all those on whom an alternative policy might be based. Though there is instinctive resistance to intervention in Indo China, there is no peace movement, there are no peace meetings. The undertow toward a new intervention grows more powerful despite the President. A situation is building up in which inept men may be pushed by some unexpected turn of events into terrible decisions in sheer funk.

Afraid to Talk Peace

An example is at hand, of the extent to which sane thinking in America has been made almost impossible. The great Super H bomb has just been exploded in the Pacific. The Alsop Brothers last Wednesday had a column discussing its significance. They reported that a Civil Defense study showed that a modern nuclear attack on this country would leave 22,000,000 injured and 9,000,000 dead. The official who made the estimate asked helplessly, "Just as a practical matter how in hell are you going to bury 9,000,000 dead?" The answer, according to the Alsops, "is that this kind of mass slaughter simply cannot be permitted to happen." They see "only one way to prevent it." The only sure way to prevent it is to remain at peace, but this idea is "subversive"; there is a block against it. The Alsop solution is "to get the people out of the cities before the bombs fall," if necessary on foot!

This sort of thinking is not confined to the Alsops. It is omnipresent. Everyone has another solution—some a bigger air force, others a radar fence around the country, etc., but no one says, "Look, the situation is so terrible we've simply got to live in peace with the Russians." No one talks that way any more, at least no one who can reach more than a handful of people. The country is afraid to talk of peace. It is being conditioned for war, and war will engulf all mankind.

This atmosphere, this growing impotence in Washington, is one no army of intervention could cure, but it is a far greater threat to world peace and security than the petty conflicts in Indo-China or Korea.

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An On-The-Scene Report from New Orleans by Jennings Perry

The Congressional Inquisition Moves South . . .

By Jennings Perry

New Orleans—While the major banners in the press clung to the McCarthy-Army entanglement, the great latter-day witch-hunt quietly moved south and opened here last week under the sole management of Sen. James O. Eastland, of Mississippi.

For three days at New Orleans, Eastland, as a one-man "task force" of the Jenner Internal Security Committee, held hearings into the possibility that the Communist conspiracy has been "masquerading behind the facade of a humanitarian educational institution" in Dixieland—the Southern Conference Educational Fund. The fund is an offshoot or outgrowth of the old Southern Conference for Human Welfare, founded in the depression years and dissolved in the '40s.

The hearings were conducted in a federal district court room at the New Orleans postoffice, a dark-panelled hall embellished, on the wall behind the high bench, with the emblematic scale of justice, in precise, even balance. Throughout the hearings the emblem managed stolidly to keep its balance only because it is carved in wood.

Statesmen at Work

At the very beginning of the hearing, Eastland emphatically informed counsel for the several witnesses present under subpoena that the right of cross-examination was unknown in congressional inquiries and that, as for other rules, the chairman would announce them as occasion required. At that first look, it struck some in the room that of the two principals on the bench, Eastland and Richard Arens, the committee's counsel, Arens, with snowy hair and knitted brows, had the statesmanlike appearance. Later however, as Arens began to chomp gum, where the Senator only chewed his cigar, this impression was altered.

The announced purpose of the hearing—to inquire into the activities of the fund—got no notice, once the proceedings began. Leo Sheiner, an attorney, and Max Shlafrock, contractor, both of Miami, the first witnesses called, refused to say whether or not they ever had heard of the fund. Both claimed protection of the Fifth Amendment, though Sheiner also insisted upon his rights under the First, Second, Sixth, Eighth, Ninth and Ten Amendments, a move Eastland took as an affront. Recognizing the appeal to the Fifth, he roared, "All the rest of that stuff is bunk!"

These witnesses were stood aside; Dr. James A. Dombrowski, executive directr of the fund, was called; and immediately the force of the reasons which have been given by other witnesses for "taking the Fifth" began to appear. It was known that Dombrowski would not take the Fifth.

A soft-voiced scholar, whose work always has been in opposition to racial discrimination, he repeatedly attempted to explain the activities of the fund, which were supposed to be in question. Instead he was pressed hour after hour upon his indorsements of peace pleas, amnesty pleas, etc., without number, and his reason for such indorsements. His reply that "if it was for peace, I probably signed it" again and again amused the committee counsel.

Refuses to Name Contributors

As to the amnesty pleas, he at one point quietly lectured his inquisitors, "It apparently is difficult for you to imagine, but there are people who speak for mercy to others for no other reason than mercy." He answered willingly any questions put about himself and the fund, but in the end denied on the grounds of "the rights of others" to produce a list of contributors to his organization.

At the end of the first day, the witnesses still to be heard were Aubrey Williams, president of the fund, Virginia Durr and Miles Horton, officers of the fund. The courtroom had been orderly, though among the spectators at the back hard looks could have been seen and deprecatory whispers passed behind screening hands.

One newsman, mistaken for a witness, was approached in the corridor by a woman who had sat tensely forward on her bench during the proceedings. "You want to rule the world, don't you?' 'she said between clenched teeth. Outside, in Lafayette Square, the azalias and camellias were in full springtime flower. The weather had improved and New Orleans went about its vast business largely unmindful of the inquisition shaping up at the federal building.

The Witnesses Against Williams

Friday morning, Williams was called. He identified himself at Arens request: publisher of the Southern Farm and Home Magazine, circulation 800,000, former National Youth Administrator, before that deputy administrator of the WPA. He is president of the educational fund. He asked no immunity under the fifth, testified freely, save that, like Dombrowski, he refused to give the names of those who have contributed to the fund. Eastland and Arens were cautious and courteous. Their chief "friendly" witness, Paul Crouch, took the stand; he claimed to have been introduced to Williams by Communists. John Butler, the committee's other witness was next; he said he had met Williams as "comrade Williams" at an event 12 years ago, and later had attended a communist party meeting at which Williams had been present.

Williams branded both statements as lies, challenged the witness to come out into the corridor and in the presence of newsmen repeat the statements, "I'll sue for everything you've got." But Eastland intervened. Neither Baker nor Crouch would accept William's challenge repeated at the adjournment of the session.

All of the accusations of party ties at this hearing were made by Crouch and Butler. Both are ex-Communists. Crouch claims a party membership of 17 years. He gives his address as Honolulu and smirkingly admits that he is a "professional witness." Butler is an earthworm of a man for whom it is possible to have compassion. Crouch is different; tall and once robust, he has a pudgy face browned by many hours under klieg lights on the witness chair.

Served Two Years At Alcatraz

Courtmartialed for inciting to disaffection among the soldiers at Schofield Barracks, Crouch was sentenced and served two years at Alcatraz. He recites with relish all the incidents of an infamous career. He wears rimless glasses which, as he waits in the witness benches to do his next denouncement, catch the light with the glitter of a monocle. He has spent "5,000 hours" relating his past to the FBI "and is not through yet."

Evidently, a great part of Crouch's confessional has been rehearsal for appearances as a committee witness in subversive hearings. He is mechanically glib, speaking in a quaint sing-song you would expect of a Hollywood extra impersonating a Canton coolie. He appears to enjoy hugely the mental strain put upon those whose honor and self-respect his testimony impugns.

According to his own word, he was a "top flight" Communist organizer in the South in the days of the New Deal. He is a sort of juke box in which many recordings have been filed; committee counsel has only to press a button marked with any name and Crouch instantly gives with his tale. It was during his accusation of Williams that he was touched off by Arens with regard to Clifford Durr.

Clifford Durr, Rhodes scholar, sometime lecturer on law at Princeton, former member of the Federal Communications Commission, had come to Eastland's hearing as counsel for his friend and neighbor Williams, and also for Miles Horton, founder and teacher at Highlander Folk School in the

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. . . Smearing Aubrey Williams and The Durrs

Tennessee mountains. He is, of course, the husband of Virginia Durr and a resident of Montgomery, Alabama. He is quiet of manner, with sensitive features in which sincerity is indelibly written.

Durr Cross-Examines Crouch

In the course of Williams testimony, Eastland suddenly decided to permit Crouch to be examined. Durr asked Crouch, "Can you prove *you* are not a Communist?" Crouch said he could and Arens leaned from the bench, "Is Mr. Durr a Communist?"

"I do not know whether he still is," Crouch replied.

"Do you know that he was?"

"Yes."

Whereupon Durr himself requested to be sworn as a witness; his client Williams left the chair, and young attorney Ben Webb, of New Orleans, who had come to the hearing to represent Dombrowski, stepped forward to ask permission to appear now also as the attorney for Durr.

"Like Trying to Catch an Eel"

The interchange now was keenly dramatic. With question after question Durr sought to pin down Crouch to names, places, times—even approximate times—at which Crouch claimed he had seen Durr in Communist company. It was like trying to catch an eel with buttered fingers, and Durr did not succeed.

On the last day of the hearing, Myles Horton, who previously had been questioned in executive session and had demanded hearing in public, was called. When he refused to discuss names other than his own, Eastman ordered him thrown out, and he was ejected physically from the room still trying to put into the record a comment on civil rights—by Pres. Eisenhower. Durr, left without his client, and trembling with indignation, moved to the witness benches.

Eastman was ready to round out and wind up his show. Crouch was returned to the chair and, in a long statement disclaiming any intent in previous testimony linking the late President Roosevelt, Mrs. Roosevelt and Justice Black with the Southern Conference "to attack the patriotism of any of these people" made the additional declaration that "Mrs. Virginia Foster Durr, Justice Black's sister in law, had full knowledge of the Communist conspiracy and its work" when she allegedly persuaded Black to address the organizational meeting of the Conference in Birmingham in 1938.

Durr Leaps at Crouch

It was too much for Durr. Whipping around the railing in front of the witness benches and crying "You say that about my wife!" he threw himself at the grinning Crouch "to kill him with my bare hands." He was restrained—with gentleness and understanding even by the brawny marshals who had with evident relish, earlier, manhandled Horton from the room. Durr was taken to the hospital because of a heart condition from which some time ago he had suffered.

And Senator Eastland's hearing in New Orleans was over. Writer Richard English, of California, a well-fed citizen not otherwise involved in the inquiry, had been put on the stand to discuss Communist methods in a genteel manner. Mrs. Durr, on the advice of her Montgomery counsel, John P. Kohn, had refused to give more than her name and to deny any Communist tie—now or ever—, giving in response to all other questions "I stand mute" for answer.

The committee's "trained dog" witnesses, Crouch and Baker, had asked for and been assured police protection till they could get out of the city. In a cab with them on the way to their hotel, one of the policemen assigned to accompany them, Joseph H. Klein, a member of the New Orleans force for 27 years, collapsed and died.

The question remained and will be debated in the South this spring of why Eastland staged his inquiry at this time, why he came into the deep south to match his zombie witnesses against fellow southerners and close neighbors like the Durrs and Aubrey Williams, why no other member of the Jenner Committee would come with him.

Rankin's Forays Recalled

Southern newsmen inevitably recalled that in other election years Congressman John Rankin, also of Mississippi, always could be counted on to discover that the "Jews and niggers" were about to take over the world, beginning with Mississippi. This year Eastland is up for reelection with strong opposition from young Lt. Gov. Carroll Gartin. He has let it be known that other "task force" hearings into the Communist conspiracy in the Land of Cotton will be held in May or June in Birmingham. New Orleans is a stone's throw from Mississippi on the south, Birmingham a stone's throw on the east. News of the Senator's brave deeds in defense of "security," it is pointed out, well could be depended upon to travel that far, and fast.

The Press Is Called

On the last day of the hearings, Fred Andersen, assistant managing editor of the Montgomery Advertiser, circulated among the nine reporters who had covered the inquiry the following query:

"On the basis of what you have seen and heard here, who of the principals represents the greatest threat to American ideals?"

There were four votes for Sen. Eastland, two for Paul Crouch, one for Dr. Dombrowski, one for Shlafrock, the Miami contractor, and one for Richard Arens, chief sub-committee counsel.

Henry Luce (That Other Weekly Publisher) and I

Agree (I am sure) that the bane of publishing is that minority of readers who need to be urged, prodded, coaxed, cozened, cooed and billed when renewal time comes around.

***Life, Time* and *Fortune* send no less than eight notices, each more beautifully and colorfully printed than the other to the laggards and some of their renewals finally cost more than the money they bring in. But Mr. Luce can make up the difference out of advertising revenue. I can't.**

This is the situation. Thanks to the majority of our readers, we are solidly in business for another year. But like other publications we find that we have a minority (among them some of our best friends) who just don't seem able to get around to renewing. We cannot afford to send eight notices; we just haven't the energy to spare, much less the money.

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—I. F. Stone

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Mundt Follows Parnell Thomas in Letting Slip The Truth

More Evidence of Liaison Between The FBI and the Witch Hunt

Evidence of liaison between the FBI and the witch hunters is accumulating. In last week's issue we quoted a statement made by J. Parnell Thomas when he was chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee. This week we offer one from Senator Mundt (R., S. D.), who succeeded Thomas as acting chairman of that committee when Thomas was prosecuted for a "kick-back."

The Mundt statement was made public by Senator Fulbright (D., Ark.) but ignored by most papers. Mundt, the ranking Republican on the McCarthy committee, made a speech last November in Salt Lake City. In that speech he said (*Salt Lake City Tribune*, Nov. 22), ". . . these probes are a valuable supplement to the investigative work of the FBI. The FBI may compile much evidence on Communist infiltration, but not enough to justify indictments. Often in such cases, said the Senator, *the FBI will tip off a Congressional Committee* as to a situation where it is convinced American security is endangered. The committee's inquiry makes it possible to bring the case into the open and, with the suspected Communist spy usually taking refuge in the Fifth amendment's protection against incriminating himself, it is possible to eliminate that particular threat."

Mundt speaks of situations in which the FBI does not have enough evidence "to justify indictments." The purpose of the grand jury system, particularly the secrecy which surrounds it, is to protect accused persons from the obloquoy and expense of a public trial unless there is enough evidence to warrant it. In this way weak, dubious or unfounded accusations can be disposed of.

Undercutting the Grand Jury System

Here we have Mundt saying that when the FBI cannot get an indictment because it has insufficient evidence, it "often in such cases" tips off a Congressional committee. Thus the FBI circumvents the grand jury system, and destroys in the public pillory those whom it cannot fairly indict and convict. They lose jobs and reputation and are as effectively destroyed as if they had been sent to jail. This is obviously what happened with those whom the FBI was unable to indict with the testimony of Elizabeth Bentley.

Mundt made quite a revelation in that Salt Lake City speech but so powerful is the FBI that even men and papers fighting McCarthy are afraid to look at the full implications. Senator Fulbright himself, in giving this out last week to a largely indifferent press, said that he was "concerned that the FBI, as our foremost safeguard against subversive activities, not be destroyed by the misuse of its confidential material." This is putting it in reverse. The misuse is the misuse of Congressional investigating committees by the FBI to terrorize all whom the secret police regard with disfavor or suspicion. But how get editors and judges to look at this gangrenous growth on a free society when they themselves have grown afraid of this same power, and of the dirt which may be hidden in its swollen files?

The FBI and the China Lobby

The mail evoked by Senator Fulbright's daring in lifting the curtain on this situation has also brought him evidence of possible links between the FBI and private witch hunters. A reader in Boston contributed page twelve of the *Boston Herald* of March 15. On the same page with Brownell's denial, "McCarthy Access to FBI Tips Denied." The *Herald* ran a story on the speeches at a New England Anti-Subversive Seminar conducted by the American Legion with Kohlberg, Victor Lasky, J. B. Matthews and Bella Dodd among the speakers. "I have seen FBI files on several persons still operating in the [State] Department," Kohlberg was quoted as saying.

The other speakers, incidentally, covered a wide swath. Lasky saw "seeds of treason" among business men who want more East-West trade, Matthews spoke on Communist infiltration in religion (mainly Protestant, of course) while Dodd was quoted as saying, "the only thing we have to fear in this country is the educated man." We can already see that FBI man asking the neighbors, "Does he read? I mean books . . ."

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